

**May 22, 2015**

*The following was sent to the KYAE list-serv.*

## ***Week 3 Message***



### **Some “barriers” are perception, not fact**

Being thoughtful people who keep the best interest of our students at the forefront, we always look ahead to make sure we can clear any barriers to their success. **Some of the things we identified as potential barriers for the 2014 GED® test have not really proven to be obstacles.**

**Moving the test to computer was a careful decision made after years of consideration.** In 2006, years before there was a partnership with Pearson, GED Testing Service® did a study to determine if the GED® test-taking population was comfortable with computers – at least performing the simplest of tasks. The survey, which was conducted by mail, included GED® test-takers from 16-69 years of age with an average age of 27. Remember – all that’s required for the test are fairly simple mouse and keyboarding skills; all necessary computer skills can be reviewed and practiced [here](#). **The results of the survey indicated that 96% of the GED® test-taker population in 2006 would take the test if it was only available on computer.** In fact, most GED® test-takers are digital natives and are comfortable with and often prefer computer testing. If you’ll recall, several of your KYAE program director colleagues appeared on [KET’s Education Matters program](#) to share how computer-based testing is *not* a barrier to student success.

The GED® test was moved to computer for several reasons:

- Some basic computer skills are needed for employment. Many employers even require online applications.
- Computer-based testing standardizes test administration and increases test security.
- It allows for seamless update of the test content to hopefully avoid hard breaks, such as the end of the test series in 2013.

**The increase in test fee was perceived as a barrier.** With the paper-based test, Kentucky had an artificially low test fee which was already on track for an increase. We were hearing from some of our largest testing centers that they were contemplating closing because they were failing to break even and having to invest their own funds. The impact of their closing would have caused significant access/transportation barriers for students seeking a location where they could test. While the national fee was a significant increase, Kentucky was able to keep that increase to a minimum by not adding any additional state fees. Also, we have been fortunate to be able to have funds available to help students with the testing fee with our “\$10 Testing” campaign which provides students who go through an adult education program with a \$20 voucher for each content area module. The only financial/contractual arrangement KYAE has with Pearson is the purchase of vouchers to help our Kentucky test-takers.

GED Testing Service® also provided assistance by discounting the cost of retakes to \$10 for up to two additional attempts per content area module. **So, for now, the cost of the GED® test is actually lower for our test-takers than it was with the paper-based GED® test.**

When funds are no longer available for the "\$10 Testing" campaign, we have identified some sources of funding for our neediest test-takers. The Department for Community Based Services and some Medicaid providers pay the fee for their eligible clients. KYAE will continue to help find sources to assist our test-takers with the fee, and, just as has been done in the past, our programs have been good at engaging community partners to assist. Many local organizations and businesses (i.e., clubs, restaurants, banks) stand ready to support those most in need.

**The Ready™ test is sometimes perceived as a barrier.** The test readiness requirement is a Kentucky regulation, not a GED Testing Service® or Pearson requirement. Test readiness was adopted by Kentucky in 1995 to increase the pass rate on the GED® test in Kentucky. Because of that requirement, the pass rate in Kentucky has improved from 63% in 1995 to our current pass rate which is over 80%. The Ready™ test was developed by GED Testing Service®, but it is sold by a number of different publishers of GED® test preparation materials, including KET. **To support our programs, KYAE has provided our programs with Ready™ test vouchers since early 2014 and plans are to continue support as long as funds are available.**

GED Testing Service® has provided Ready™ test support by offering promotions that made the Ready™ test free or at a reduced fee. In addition, a version of the test for those with accommodations for extended time has been developed and an offline version for use in corrections by adult educators will be released soon.

**Some think there is a limited number of GED® testing centers. In fact, there are more than 70 testing centers in Kentucky, with more being added all the time. And because our test centers moved from offering public testing on a monthly/quarterly basis at approximately 40 locations to offering weekly testing at approximately the same number of locations, our testing footprint has actually increased over what was available for the paper-based test.** We also have five mobile sites that can reach out to areas and facilities that may not be able to support a fixed-site testing center. There are still a few areas that need more access, and we are continuing to work to address those.

**Thankfully, the barriers we thought we would encounter have turned out not to be such formidable obstacles. We are counting on you to keep watching out for your students, but please help us spread the facts, not the perceptions.**

If you have additional questions, contact Rae Smith at [rae.smith@ky.gov](mailto:rae.smith@ky.gov).

**WANT TO KNOW WHAT THIS IS ABOUT? Find out about the May Messages Learn & Win Challenge here: <http://kyae.ky.gov/educators/maymessages.htm>.**